Vengeance

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by lakesinstillness

Summary

When the version of Will Hannibal created in Will's subconscious begins to leak into Will's normal conscious state, Hannibal seeks to reaffirm his value while not exposing what really happened. He comes to find that Will knows more than he lets on.

Notes

Omg thank you for all the kudos and comments on the previous one, wasn't expecting that!

I also wasn't expecting to write a sequel, especially this soon. Just thought of it this morning and wrote it.

In the weeks following the destruction of Hannibal's creation, Hannibal came to find that the walls between the two states of Will's consciousness were thinner than they thought. Or at the very least, that cruelty traveled between that wall far easier than gentility.

During their sessions, Hannibal did not hypnotize Will anymore. He wanted no part of the thing he created and destroyed in Will's consciousness. But even in just talking to Will, he could tell the lasting effect it had on him. Will, of course, blamed it on the beating he endured and still did not remember, the beating that brought him to Hannibal's doorstep.

Ever since then, Will seemed to care more about his appearance than before. Hannibal could tell just by looking at him, and even by smelling him, that he was putting extra effort into everything. Not to an extreme level, but enough to take away from Will's time, and enough that Will was distressed about it. And embarrassed about it, as when he discussed it with Hannibal he always made a point about how self-obsessed it seemed, caring about things like that. A lasting effect of calling that state of Will Vanity, an impact Hannibal did not expect.

But it was not merely that Will was insecure, or was fixated solely on his appearance. No, Will seemed more focused on being valuable in general, more than he did before ever before. He always seemed to feel like he had to use his empathy to help Jack, even though it hurt him, but now that was even more true. But he didn't just seek his validation through his work, but everyone around him. At least that's how it seemed to Hannibal.

Hannibal initially thought to correct this harm by hypnotizing Will again and affirming his inherent value. But he ultimately decided against it. Will needed to affirm himself, and that was something Hannibal could merely help him with but not directly control.

Yet at the same time, Hannibal could not help Will in a way that would reveal the truth about what happened that night. What Hannibal did, instead, was merely sit Will down, and then have him close his eyes and think about what he already did remember, what information had already crossed that wall. Hannibal could then work with that to piece together a false narrative of what could have happened, and help Will challenge the thoughts that crossed over.

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During one of these sessions, Hannibal realized they were making progress when Will's voice began to shake as he answered questions, and the silent gaps between Hannibal's questions and Will's answers lengthened. Curious, Hannibal posed a question for Will. "If the person who did this to you was here, right now, what would you say to them?"

Will took some time before answering, clearly thinking over what he knew about what happened and what he didn't. But finally, he did answer: "I would tell him that I was merely doing what he asked of me." It was at that moment that Hannibal realized Will knew more than he had initially thought. Hannibal had punished Will for merely answering a question, a question that he himself had asked. All because Hannibal was not expecting an answer.

Just as Hannibal was about to move on, he noticed Will was growing more and more distressed, the sweat on his forehead glimmering in the light of the fireplace, the rise and fall of his chest intensifying. "What is it, Will?"

Will took his time answering, and by the time he did, he had calmed down some, his breathing returning to normal after one last deep breath. "I was just repeating what he told me," Will answered. He did not sound as emotional when he said it, as if he was just stating a fact.

Hannibal was now forced to acknowledge the truth. His Dorian had *never* been corrupted, he was just repeating what he had been taught. That version of Will likely did not even know what the words he spoke meant, merely that his worshiper had bestowed them upon him, so many times before. The painter's work had spoken for itself, but it did not once display a hue that was not first painted on it. Hannibal had hypnotized a man, told him he was beautiful, and then punished him for merely repeating those words.

Hannibal thought long and hard about what to say to Will next. How to affirm Will without acknowledging what he did. "You cannot place your value in someone like that. Someone who still won't be satisfied, even when you've given them exactly what they asked for."

"Knowing that doesn't make it easier."

"You can't just know it, Will. You have to *live* it. Live for yourself, and not for the versions of yourself others create." Hannibal paused, seeing if Will would say anything in response. "I think that's enough for today, Will. You can open your eyes now."

Will opened them, but didn't do anything after that. Hannibal let him be for a minute or so, thinking he just needed time to collect himself. But even still he didn't move an inch, nor say a word.

"Will?" Hannibal questioned, but received nothing in response. Will just kept staring directly in front of him. Had that alternate version of Will somehow come forward? "Who are you?" Hannibal asked.

"I am nothing," Will answered.

Hannibal did not know what to do at first. He did not plan on awakening this part of Will and yet somehow he had awoken him. Or maybe this part of Will awoke of its own volition. Maybe this part of Will longed for closure that only his worshiper could provide.

Hannibal hoped that was the case when he got down on his knees, in front of the chair Will sat in. He took Will's hand and looked directly into his eyes. "You are not nothing. You are everything, *everything* that there ever was and will be." He stopped to kiss Will's hand, but only once. "And you are loved, but you are not everything because you are loved. Rather, you are loved because you are everything."

Just as Hannibal was about to awaken Will, the normal Will, he realized that he had his next appointment in only a few minutes. He knew Will would struggle with the realization that he had lost time again, which would take time for Hannibal to help him through. Instead, Hannibal decided to keep him in this state, but bring him to the bedroom for now. Hannibal laid Will in his bed, as he had done so many times before, before returning to meet his client.

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When the appointment was finished, Hannibal returned to Will. "Are you ready to wake up now, Will?" he asked, before noticing that the bed was empty. "Will?"

Before he knew it, he felt someone take hold of his neck from behind, choking him. "So it *was* you who did this to me," Will spat. "I managed to remember everything, except for who did it. I had my suspicions, but now I know for sure."

It took Hannibal a moment to process what was happening. Had Will woken up on his own? No… his words indicated that the other version of Will had never come forth at all. He remembered exactly how that other version of himself was trained to act, and had acted in the exact same way. All to get Hannibal to admit the truth.

Will released his grip on Hannibal's neck, but continued holding him. "I'm impressed, Will. But you *really* should have told me sooner. You didn't overhear my patient, did you? You know confidentiality is a major concern of mine."

"Shut up." Will forced Hannibal to look in the mirror, as if to make him reflect on the sin he committed. "You… if you wanted me to be a god, you should have worshiped me as I am. Not as you wanted me to be."

Hannibal allowed Will to pin him to the bed. "I'll be God for you," Will continued. "But not the silent, unresponsive god you fantasized about. No, I'll be a wrathful one, who punishes those who sin."

Will began hitting and punching Hannibal, which Hannibal did not fight. At some point between punches, Hannibal sang Will's praises: "You bring not peace, but a sword." If this vengeance could bring Will closure, then perhaps it was worth it.

But Will was unrelenting, and went slightly beyond what Hannibal had done to him. “Will, that’s enough,” Hannibal said sternly. Will stopped, but only to spit in Hannibal’s eye before he kept going. “That’s *enough*,” he repeated, catching Will’s fist with his hand.

Will raised his fist again before finally responding to him. “Tell me I'm beautiful,” he demanded.

“No,” Hannibal answered, before bracing himself for the punch he was sure to get in response.

“Do it! Or do you wish to deny worship to the God you created?”

Will *was* beautiful. He was the most beautiful creature Hannibal had ever seen, no matter what form his body or mind took. Everything about him, from his soul to his flesh to his scent, emanated pure beauty. But at the same time, none of these things made Will beautiful, he just *was*. His very nature was beautiful, and that was *not* something Hannibal could ever enact his agency on. But Hannibal could not say all of that out loud, after everything his praises had put Will through. He had to show it with his actions.

“You know I can’t call you that,” Hannibal said softly, reaching out to hold Will’s wrist. “Doing it now would only be more damaging for you. Though God demands praise, He does not derive His power from it. And neither shall you.”

Will lowered his fist, lip trembling. Hannibal stared into his eyes as they filled with tears, gazing across the face he had beaten. Will buried his face in Hannibal’s chest and let out loud, frantic sobs.

Hannibal laid there, allowing Will to cry on him and reflecting on everything that had happened, and how it started: with his desire to express his love, a love so complex it could not be expressed through mere words. Hannibal’s love was so fluid and paradoxical because the nature of the object of his love was all of those things as well. Will’s nature was that of a river, both rushing and calm, bringing both life and destruction wherever it flowed.

After a while of staying like that, accepting Will’s nature as it came, Hannibal dipped a toe in the water by reaching out to pet him. “You are just like He who damns men, and then weeps for them because they are damned,” he teased.

“I do not weep for you,” Will explained. He lifted his head and took Hannibal’s hand, forcing it to touch his cheek. “I weep for me, for I was the one who had to damn you.”

Hannibal accepted Will's unspoken demand for comfort by stroking Will's face with his thumb, using it to wipe away Will's tears. “Is there any way that a damned man like me could still enter Paradise?” Will stared blankly for a moment, clearly struggling to decide on an answer. “It doesn’t matter,” Hannibal continued, “because I’ll hold my faith regardless of whether or not you forgive me.”

“Forgiveness usually begins with a confession,” Will answered. “I would like to hear the sin you committed in your words, Hannibal.”

“I did not properly honor the God in front of me, so I created my own version of Him. A false idol that could not speak nor move, and thus could not tell me exactly how He wanted to be worshiped. Because I foolishly placed my own desire to worship over the will of the God I was worshiping.”

“You thought your kisses were that of Peter, when really they were of Judas.”

“Yes.”

It was at that moment that Hannibal realized his creation in Will's subconscious, his Dorian, *had indeed been corrupted, but not by his own ego. Nor was he merely repeating words without thinking. Hannibal had corrupted him, ruined him, way before he ever decided to destroy him. In fact, that alternate version of Will, that false idol, was destroyed from the very moment of its creation, just as Christ had been born and killed and Risen from the moment God uttered that first demand for light. From the moment Hannibal decided to express his love to a hypnotized form of Will, rather than the true form, he had corrupted that form.*

Will said not another word, instead getting up and leaving the room. Hannibal thought for a moment that it was over, that Will had left him. But Will returned, with a wet cloth and a pack of ice.

“No,” Hannibal protested, reaching out to grab the man’s wrist. “You mustn't show me mercy now.”

Will shoved Hannibal’s hand away. “Don’t touch me, Satan.”

Hannibal couldn’t help but smile at that. “I can never predict you, Will.”

“I don’t think I'm all that unpredictable. Is it not in God’s nature to be both wrathful and merciful?” Will began to tend to Hannibal’s face, cleaning it first before pressing the ice against Hannibal’s swollen cheek, the beaten man no longer protesting. “And is your love for me not the same way?”

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